



## **League of Women Voters of Portland**

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**Date:** August 10, 2023

**To:** Honorable District Judge Michael Simon

**From:** League of Women Voters of Portland  
Carolyn Buppert, president

**Re:** Status Conference  
United States of America v. City of Portland Case No. 3:12-cv-02265-SI

The League of Women Voters of Portland began studying policing in Portland in the 1960s and has been engaged in issues related to law enforcement and police oversight since that time. We appreciate the opportunity to comment once again on the city's progress meeting the terms of the Settlement Agreement.

### **Police Accountability Commission**

The League endorsed Ballot Measure 26-217 and supports the charter amendment voters adopted by a significant majority in November 2020. It is our expectation that the new oversight system the Police Accountability Commission (PAC) is designing will bring a greater degree of accountability and transparency to Portland policing than the system that is currently in place. Placing investigative and disciplinary authority in the hands of civilian staff and a community board should build greater public trust.

In the end, we may not agree with every aspect of the PAC's final proposal, but we do support the direction it is headed. The commission has carefully followed the charter amendment's provisions and City Council direction, incorporated effective and promising practices from other jurisdictions, and relied on research and reports produced by the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement and the U.S. Department of Justice (U.S. DOJ), among others. We urge the court, U.S. DOJ, and City Council to carefully consider the final recommendation, follow the will of the voters, and support creation of the new oversight board and civilian agency.

### **Portland Street Response**

The primary reason for the U.S. DOJ's presence in Portland is the 2012 finding that Portland Police Bureau (PPB) officers used excessive force against people with mental health conditions or in mental health crisis. The city's creation of the Portland Street Response (PSR) program was meant

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*To promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government.*

to provide an alternative more humane approach to assisting people with mental health issues in order to avoid encounters with the police. The League wholeheartedly supports the program.

Unfortunately, and in spite of positive assessments conducted by Portland State University, the critical services PSR is able to provide have been reduced and its budget threatened. The League encourages the court and U.S. DOJ to make it clear to the city that this program is essential to addressing the problem the U.S. DOJ identified when it conducted its original investigation.

### **Contact Surveys**

The Compliance Officer/Community Liaison (COCL) makes a persuasive case for providing contact surveys to community members following encounters with the police. The PPB and city have devoted considerable time, expense, and effort in implementing U.S. DOJ and COCL recommendations for improving policing in Portland. Soliciting feedback on individual experiences will provide a clearer picture of the impact these reforms are having on Portland residents.

### **Portland Committee on Community Engaged Policing**

League members attend many of the PCCEP meetings and continue to appreciate the access to information and PPB leaders, the discussions related to policies of community concern, and the welcoming atmosphere PCCEP offers the public. We are encouraged by the improvements implemented over the last year.

The PCCEP could improve its service to the community by more actively informing the people on its distribution list when key reports are issued and placing all Settlement Agreement-related documents on its website.

As always, we sincerely appreciate your willingness to include the public in these hearings and for listening so carefully to what everyone has to say.